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ABSTRACT

Changes in college government generally incorporate the following features: (1) they provide structural means for the expression of opinion, (often the right to vote) to representatives of groups hitherto underrepresented or unrepresented on decision-making bodies; (2) they are intended to make the decision-making process more explicit, and more visible; and (3) they generally retain separate faculty and student governmental structures. These changes tend to reflect more accurately the actual conditions of power and authority on campus. Whereas the issue of student and faculty participation in decision making has been extensively explored, the roles of the president, his associates, and the board of trustees have been largely ignored. If boards of trustees were eliminated, as some have suggested, external groups would gain further power over collegiate institutions, and the parochialism and self-interest so often manifested by faculty and students would increase and conflict with external forces. Boards of trustees should become more representative of diverse social and economic groups and better informed about their institutions. The president should assume responsibility for providing adequate information to the institution's decision making bodies. (AF)

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REFLECTIONS ON NEW CONFIGUARATIONS IN CAMPUS GOVERNANCE*

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The changes which have made in college government take a variety of forms in different colleges and universities depending on the type of institution-community colleges are distinguished from universities, etc.--, the particularities within the institutions which prompted the changes - at Columbia the changes were made in response to the occupation of buildings in 1968 while at other institutions changes were made without the stimulus of such dramatic events - and other factors.

Thus, it is difficult to discover a pattern in the new configurations which apply equally across the country. However, it does appear that most modifications in collegiate government incorporate the following:

1. They provide structural means for the expression of opinion, and often for the right to vote, to representatives of groups which have hitherto been under-represented or not represented at all on communities, council and senates which make decisions for the institutions. For example, students and junior faculty have gained representation on decision-making bodies in most of the institutions which have changed their governments.

2. Most changes in collegiate government are intended to make the processes of decision-making more explicit and the decision-making bodies more visible to the campus. Thus, the plans for reform often include descriptions of jurisdiction for various governmental bodies and many provide that deliberations of such bodies shall be open to observation. Some plans provide for open hearings by such bodies and a few provide that such bodies must respond to initiative from the campus by placing requested items on their agendas.

3. While there is a clear trend toward the establishment of decision-making bodies which include membership from senior faculty, junior faculty, students and sometimes from non-teaching members of the campus, most colleges and universities have also retained separate faculty and student governmental structures.

Study of several dozen reports on "campus government" from individual colleges and universities show that most reports justify the proposals for reform on appeals to democratic principles (persons affected by decisions of government should participate in government) and by noting that the reforms are intended to increase the chances for consensus which, it is said, is essential to campus peace.

A more direct, and I think more helpful, way to justify the changes is to note that they are intended to make the governmental procedures more consistent with the actual distribution of power and authority in the institutions. For example, there can be little doubt that the power and authority of boards, senior professors and presidents over junior faculty and students has been in decline for some time (in the case of students this decline dates back at least to the end of the Second World War). The perpetuation of systems of government which were reflections of the distribution of power and authority of a past eara made them dysfunctional and in many institutions exercises in futility.

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This inconsistency between the arrangements for government and the shift in power and authority accounts, I believe, for the principal characteristic of collegiate government during the past two decades: it was essentially immobilized because the power to veto (by refusing to accept decisions) outweighed the power to decide. Since power of students and junior faculty had risen but had not yet been reflected in changes in governmental processes, they were left with little alternative but to resist the decisions of government.

To the extent, therefore, that the modifications in collegiate government more accurately reflect the actual conditions of power and authority on the campus they seem to me to be useful.

The incorporation into government of representatives from campus groups which up to now have had little influence over basic decisions appears to be a move in the right direction. The fact that multi-representational bodies with faculty and student participation have been created in addition to student and faculty bodies may, however, prove to be unworkable. Much will depend on how clearly the separate student and faculty bodies can define limited jurisdictional areas of responsibility which will not be pre-empted by the more inclusive groups.

The plans for changes in collegiate government almost uniformly leave two important questions unresolved:

1. What roles in campus government are the president and his close associates to play? and,

2. What role is the Board of Trustees to play?

The implicit assumption (almost no reports deal directly with these questions) of most reports seems to be that the changes are designed to reduce the power of presidents and that Boards of trustees should play no vital role in collegiate government. In the"zero-sum" game of campus power - someone must lose power if others gain since there is not likely to be more power to be divided - presidents and boards are the losers and few on the campus regret this.

This , of course, carries syndicalism on the campus several steps beyond that which we have known and raises serious questions especially in light of the record of performance of other representations of syndicalism which have consistently ignored the public trust and have been insensitive to questions of justice and equity (consider the record of the American Medical Association with regard to adequate care for the poor, the record of craft unionism with regard to opportunities for blacks and the record of the academic guilds which controlled Oxford and Cambridge Universities in this regard). It is difficult, therefore, to view with equanimity the prospect of greatly increased faculty and student power.

Earlier in this discussion I noted that most plans for the reform of collegiate government give little or any specific attention to the roles which presidents (and their close associates) and boards of trustees are to play in collegiate government.

The recommendations on these matters in the study recently completed at Stanford University are illustrative:

> "The primary responsibility of the Board of Trustees should be to ensure the long-run welfare of the University and to support the University in its relationships with other social institutions and with its external constituencies."

> "The principal role of the President should be to exercise educational leadership." [1]

While the report elaborates these statements to some degree, the reader is left with the feeling that the committee was unable or unwilling to describe in operational terms just how the President and the Board of Trustees at Stanford were to accomplish these responsibilities.

It may well be, of course, that Boards of Trustees in American colleges and universities are anachronisms and that they should be replaced by fund raising councils of alumni and other interested persons. The erosion of their authority, first to the faculty and lately to governmental agencies (state and federal) is well known and if the modifications of collegiate government take even more of their authority away, the remaining rationale for such bodies will be hard to describe. The de jure sovereignty with which they are currently vested could easily be transferred to a college or university senate consisting of faculty and students.

My own view is that such a development would be fraught with dangers: first, if trustees are eliminated the external groups will gain further power over collegiate institutions and, second, the parochialism and self-interest all too evident in faculty and student actions will increase and will be in conflict with external groups who pursue special interests and those which express the "public" interest.

Having argued that trustees can play an important role in collegiate government, one is left with the question of whether the structure and function of such groups can be modified to make them more useful. The evidence on that question is not encouraging.

It may be, of course, that the several plans to broaden the membership of boards by bringing in representatives of diverse social and economic groups from the public and the plans to add fauclty and studnets to boards will provide a lease on life to trustees. It may also be that trustees will become more knowledgeable about their institutions. But at the moment American college boards of trustees represent the most problematic element in college government.

Perhaps the most troublesome question raised by the recent developments in collegiate government concerns the role assigned to the presidents. With the unspecified mandate to "provide educational leadership" and with gravitation of power and authority to faculty and student legislative bodies, it seems obvious that presidential leadership will have to assume new forms. Persuasion will become the principal method of leadership and it will have to have a moral base, i.e., it will have to be formulated in terms of equity, justice and social need. [2]

[1] From, Government of the University, by the Steering Committee for the Study of Education at Stanford, February 1969.

[2] See, The Politics of the Private College, by W. Max Wise, New Haven, Hazen Foundation, 1968.

A missing ingredient in the processes of collegiate government is an organized method of providing adequate information to decision-making bodies. Committees, senates and boards regularly discuss and resolve questions of policy in states of massive ignorance: they lack data about student, faculty and programs in their own institutions and they fail to consult the experience of other collegiate institutions. Most of all they act without the stimulation and guidance of carefully developed interpretations of the relations of proposed actions to the long range plans of their institutions. The result much too often is that the deliberations of committees, senates and boards are exercises in rhetoric and the decisions are reflections of strong personalities and loud voices. In addition, the time required of members of such bodies is clearly excessive when considered in relation to the accomplishments.

Presidents and their close associates could, if they conceived of their work differently, provide this missing ingredient. If they accepted the responsibility for making sure that deliberative bodies knew, "...The realities which confront them, the principles which guide a proposed course of action, and the limitations and costs of alternative courses," [3] they could make the work of these groups more efficient and more effective.

[3]From, The Church, The University, and Social Policy, by Kenneth Underwood, Middletown, Wesleyan Press, 1969. Pp.297-8.